



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
Department of Environmental Protection  
79 Elm Street, Hartford, CT 06106

Arthur J. Rocque Jr.,  
Commissioner

**TO:** Sue Jacobson, E.A. III  
DEP/Office of Long Island Sound Programs

**FROM:** Douglas Glowacki, E.A. III  
DEP/Inland Water Resources Division

**DATE:** October 1, 2003

**RE:** Winter Storms in Long Island Sound

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At your request, I have researched the historical effects of winter storms within Long Island Sound in the area of the Thimble Islands. In a typical winter storm season (November 1<sup>st</sup> to April 1<sup>st</sup>) there are 2 – 3 Northeasters (strong low pressure systems) that cause significant wave action and storm surge on Long Island Sound. The area in and around the thimble islands should anticipate 2 – 3 storm events between November 1<sup>st</sup> and April 1<sup>st</sup> of this year. Each of these events can be expected to result in 4 – 6 foot waves (propagating from the Southeast or East) and a storm surge of 2.5 – 3.5 feet. Some rip currents can also be expected near coastlines. These conditions typically last for 12 – 24 hours.

In rare cases, such as the December Northeaster of 1992, the thimbles can expect 6 – 8 foot waves, a 4 – 5 foot storm surge and easterly winds as high as 50 mph for a period of 24 – 36 hours with dangerous rip currents and significant erosion of coastal beaches and dunes. The 1992 storm has a 2.5% chance of occurring during each winter season.

Any contractor should be prepared to secure their equipment with as little as 12 hours notice of an approaching storm, and should also have an emergency evacuation plan for people and equipment should a major winter storm affect the area.

CONNECTICUT POST Sunday, January 10, 1993

# Sea 'farmers' eligible for relief

Shellfish and finfish farmers in Connecticut are eligible for federal crop-disaster relief funds, according to a law passed by Congress and signed by President Bush on Sept. 23, 1992.

Agriculture has long been able to seek financial assistance for crops lost due to natural disasters, but those "farming the sea" have not had that opportunity until now. There are actually two federal programs, administered by the USDA Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service that now include aquaculture as part of their scope. This news couldn't have come at a better time for those involved in Connecticut shellfish aquaculture.

The storm that ravaged the state Dec. 11-13, battering the coastline with hurricane-strength winds, caused tremendous damage not only to homes but also to many shellfish beds. The storm waves moved around a lot of sand that buried the oysters, causing them to suffocate or making them impossible to harvest.

Although damage assessments are still under way or have not yet taken place due to adverse weather conditions and the typical holiday demand for oysters, a number of shellfish farmers have apparently suffered devastating losses of oysters.

The state's natural seed beds — located near the mouth of the Housatonic River — sustained damage as well. Seed oysters (young quarter-sized oysters) harvested from these beds are transplanted to growout grounds, eliminating the need to buy seed from out of state or from hatcheries. The state and the shellfish industry have invested a lot of time and money into enhancing these beds and only time will tell how badly the beds were affected.

Preliminary estimates of losses provided to Gov. Lowell P. Weicker Jr. right after the storm by the Aquaculture Division totalled \$2 million. Since some of the problems might not become evident until this spring, as more thorough damage assessments are made, this figure could increase.

The good news is that shellfish farmers might be eligible for up to



By NANCY  
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\$100,000 in federal funds to help compensate them for their losses. The Crop Loss Disaster Program, applying to production lost to a natural disaster during a particular year, is hardly a "windfall government program."

However, some assistance is certainly better than none at all and it will fulfill its main purpose — to help shellfish farmers get back on track in providing food to consumers. In Connecticut, applications for relief stemming from this storm will provide the personnel of the regional Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service offices, familiar with dairy operations and traditional land-based crops, with an education in farming a product that takes 4 to 5 years to reach market size and that you can't see until it is harvested. (Is an oyster more like a calf or a cow, in terms of lost production?)

Good records will be invaluable to a prospective applicant, in terms of projecting losses. Applicants have to demonstrate that the losses occurred due to the natural disaster and not because of poor management.

The second ASCS program that can assist aquaculturists, albeit not retroactively, is the Emergency Conservation Program. This program is intended to "make payments to agricultural producers who carry out emergency measures to control wind erosion of farm-

lands or to rehabilitate farmlands damaged by ... natural disasters," so that the lands can be returned to agricultural productivity.

This program has been allocated \$10 million, which, with maximum awards of \$200,000 per person per disaster, will not go far. A decision is pending on just how aquaculture fits into the definition of "farmland."

The approval process that enabled aquaculture production losses to be eligible for these two USDA federal assistance programs reflects the growing recognition of the significant contributions by the aquaculture industry in providing food to consumers and its acceptance as a sector of mainstream agriculture.

The initial applications received by the ASCS from aquaculturists will serve as test cases, helping to define the previously undefined and paving the way for further recognition and federal assistance for this industry. While this new law benefits aquaculture nationwide, on a local note, let's hope that Connecticut's shellfish farmers are successful in their bid for recompense from the storm of December 1992.

*Editor's Note — On Long Island Sound appears every other week in the Sunday Post. Nancy Balcom works for the Marine Advisory Program, part of Connecticut Sea Grant and UConn's Cooperative Extension System.*

## Runaway Vermont cop found dead in New York

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